



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

FIRE DEPARTMENT

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August 4, 2008

TO: EACH SUPERVISOR

FROM: P. MICHAEL FREEMAN

REPORT REGARDING THE REVIEW OF EXISTING BUILDING AND FIRE CODES APPLICABLE TO STUDIO SETS, VIDEO LIBRARIES AND RELATED FACILITIES, AND RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO IMPROVE FIRE SAFETY – NBC UNIVERSAL

On June 4, 2008, your Board directed the Fire Chief to expand the scope of the fire flow assessment team to include a review of existing building codes applicable to studio sets, video libraries and related facilities, and to recommend any prudent changes deemed appropriate in the interest of fire safety.

Reviewing the Building Code revealed the fact that movie sets and facades are exempt and not regulated by the Fire Code. Facades are temporary in nature and do not meet the definition of a building. Amending the Building Code to include facades and movie sets is not feasible due to the inability for such structures to comply with other aspects of the building and mechanical code. However, buildings for video libraries are already regulated in both the Building and Fire Code.

The Fire Code does not regulate movie sets or facades; however, Fire Code Section 101.8 provides the County government the authority to establish more restrictive and reasonably necessary changes to the Code based on findings due to climatic, topographical, or geological conditions. The Fire Department finds that facades and movie sets located at NBC Universal, Hollywood, are subject to climatic conditions of Santa Ana winds and topographical features where the studio is located to cause the County to develop more restrictive standards which justify the creation of a Fire Department regulation for construction and maintenance of movie sets and facades. Therefore, a "Movie Set and Facade Regulation" is being developed.

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SOUTH EL MONTE
SOUTH GATE
TEMPLE CITY
WALNUT
WEST HOLLYWOOD
WESTLAKE VILLAGE
WHITTIER

Through our analysis of existing codes and recent fire activity the Fire Department has identified recommendations for reconstruction of the movie sets and facades at NBC Universal. These are listed below:

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Studio Sets and Facades

An Interdepartmental Assessment Team (IAT) comprised of representatives from the Department of Public Works, Building and Safety Division, NBC Universal, and the Fire Department has been created for the purpose of creating a partnership to address fire and life safety issues involving the construction and use of outdoor facades and movie sets.

The IAT will develop construction requirements that provide an appropriate level of fire protection and continue to provide the necessary flexibility to facilitate NBC Universal's ability to conduct movie production. Items to be considered will include but are not limited to:

- Use of fire retardant treated wood products.
- Use of non-combustible framing materials and wall coverings.
- Use of fire rated construction to limit the development and spread of fire.
- Use of rated fire walls to divide facades into smaller compartments.
- Use of automatic interior fire sprinkler systems.
- Investigate the use of modified foam/fiberglass products for exterior wall coverings.
- Physical separation of facades to other buildings and/or fire rated construction with opening protection due to the proximity of other buildings.
- Review the use of the existing manually operated exterior deluge sprinkler systems.

2. Fire Water Supply:

- Establish required fire flow in accordance with Regulation #8 for facade structures.
- Provide a third interconnect at the east side of the Universal property.
- Provide a Fire Department Connection (FDC) manifold at each upper and lower system interconnect points.
- Consider a fire service connection from the 1116 DWP system from Barham Boulevard to the lower lot.
- Consider a fire service connection from the 1116 DWP system near Patsy Cline Drive and Buddy Holly Drive to the upper lot.

3. Fire Protection Systems:

- Install automatic interior fire sprinkler systems in the facades per nationally recognized standards or engineering analysis.
- Locate Fire Department connections away from facade structures.
- Locate fire hydrants away from facade structures.
- Isolate the underground water supply serving fire sprinkler systems for the facades from the fire hydrant system by use of identifiable sectional control valves.

4. Hot Work Permits

- Require increased fire watch time from 30 minutes as specified in Section 2604.2.1 of the Los Angeles County Fire Code to 1 hour when performing hot work in facade locations.
- Require a charged 1-3/4" hose line, long enough to reach all hot work areas, in addition to the fire extinguisher requirement found in Section 2604.2.6 of the Los Angeles County Fire Code when performing hot work in facade locations.

5. Video Libraries and Related Facilities

- Continue to regulate in accordance with the current Los Angeles County Building and Fire Codes, including high piled and high hazard commodity storage requirements.

SUMMARY

The Department of Public Works, Building and Safety Division, the Fire Department, and NBC Universal, are committed to rebuilding the facades at Universal Studios expeditiously using fire resistive materials protected by automatic fire extinguishing systems. In order to provide conditions for timely reconstruction while the "Movie Set and Facade Regulation" is being developed, we have drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which is currently under review by all parties.

The MOU will set fire protection and building guidelines for the construction, alteration, and assessment of the facades and other similar outdoor structures. The MOU will include provisions for an annual review and dialogue, continuously refining best management practices around fire protection systems, building materials, construction techniques, and structure proximity. The MOU is proprietary and the property of NBC Universal.

The concurrent development of the Fire Department "Movie Set and Facade Regulation" will memorialize Fire Department requirements into the County Code. The Department of Public Works, Building and Safety Division, is working in coordination with the Fire Department in the development of the new "Movie Set and Facade Regulation."

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Establishment of the MOU and the "Movie Set and Facade Regulation" will result in a higher level of building safety and fire protection than the current State of California and County of Los Angeles' Building and Fire Codes require. This will provide the greatest opportunity for the County of Los Angeles and NBC Universal to take immediate advantage of shared expertise as well as new and emerging technology in facilitating the reconstruction of the facades.

If you have any questions, please call me at (323) 881-2401.

PMF:kj

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